Frontier agreements with the neighboring kingdoms. In consequence of agreements reached with the princes of the peninsula, the frontiers of Lan-Xang were permanently fixed from Khone in the south to Pha-Day in the north, and from Siam in the west to Annam in the east. With this last country, to which Souligna had bound himself by taking one of King Le-duy-Ky's daughters as a concubine, it was agreed that all the people who lived in "houses on piles and with verandas" should be called subjects of the king of /342/ Vientiane, and that those who inhabited houses "without piles or verandas" should belong to Annam. 631 643* 175* 653

The stay of the Dutchman Van Wusthof in Vientiane (1641). In 1641 Vientiane was visited by the Dutch traveler Van Wusthof (2). /105/ The account which he has left of his stay in the 175* 114

2. A Jesuit, Father Jean-Marie Leria, had visited Vientiane before Van Wusthof and had returned to Annam by way of Hinboun and Vinh. Cf. G. Maspero, op. cit. /Un empire colonial francais: l'Indochine. Paris, 1929-1930./, and P. Martini, Relation de divers voyages curieux, published at Paris in 1666, "chez Sebastien Marbre-Cramoisy, imprimeur du Roy, rue Saint-Jacques, aux Cicognes."

capital of Lan-Xang contains precious information, even though it remains rather vague because of a lack of previous knowledge and of impartial observation (1). Thus Buddhism in Laos, for example,

1. Histoires singulieres qui se sont passees dans les royaumes du Cambodge et au pays du Laos, aux Indes orientales depuis l'annee 1635 jusqu'en l'annee 1664 avec le voyage des Neerlandais du Cambodge, en remontant la riviere de Laos, a Vinejan, la cour de S. M. le roi de Laos et enfin le cruel massacre qui a eu lieu au Cambodge par les Indiens en l'an 1643, published at Haarlem without any author's name and printed in 1669 by "Pieter Casteleyn, imprimeur demeurant au marche, dans la couronne imperiale." Cf. G. Maspero, op. cot. /Un empire colonial francais: l'Indochine. Paris, 1929-1930./

appeared to him as a crude "paganry," and the number of bonzes scandalized him, as did the morals of the gentle and sensual

mandarin and head of the tribunal; 3) the Phaya Muong- 647
Khang or first mandarin of the center and head of the Serv- 642
ice of public works, transports, etc. 631

The Senam was composed of the Phaya Muong-Khoua or /646/
second right-hand mandarin, and of four councillors under the direction of the Phya Muong-Sen.

The judges or Kromakanes, who were under the Phaya /693/
Muong-Sen and the Phaya Muong-Tiane, numbered seven in all and included the Phaya Muong-Sai or second left-hand mandarin.

Last came the mandarins responsible for the collection of /653●
taxes, the assembling of labor drafts and the transport of 644/
bamboo, rattan, thatch and pirogues for the king's service and the public services; then the pages and chamberlains or mahaleks, the military leaders, the functionaries responsible for petty tasks inside the palace, the treasurers, storekeepers, etc.

The reader will note the insignificant position reserved /701/
for the military mandarins in this hierarchy. Of Sam-Sene-Thai's powerful army (see above, p. 56), nothing at all remained.

provinces were aided by an Oupahat, a Ratsavong and a Ratsabout who, like the court dignitaries, gave their orders to the tassengs or canton heads who had authority over the village leaders (naibans). By establishing the different government commissions in Laos Pavie therefore strengthened the native authorities in their age-old prerogatives and the princes of Luang-Prabang in /325/ their dynastic rights and privileges. In order to mark their absolute attachment to France and to give more force to their vehement protests against awarding Siam the part of the kingdom situated on the right bank, the latter insisted on receiving, in solemn fashion and as soon as possible, the investiture of the government of the Republic from the commissioner general. After his return from Muong-Sing eight 643*
months later, Pavie drew up on parchment in Hanoi the titles of the old king Oun-Kham, of King Zakarine, of his brother and of the Oupahat Boun-Khong, and on April 19, 1895 proceeded to this important ceremony.

"All those who had a part in the control of affairs," he wrote as he finished the account of his mission, "were present. The entire populace was invited. In the name of the government of the

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the steep slopes of certain peaks, the brinks of torrents, etc.--are being subjected to new routings or improvement projects which will soon be carried out. (Bulletin économique de l'Indo-Chine, loc. cit.) [Translator's note. This seems to be a reference to the December 1899 number, "Notes du Commandant supérieur du Bas Laos sur la région est du Bas Laos."]

elephant back).

Province of Saravane. 1. Road from Ban-Mouang to Saravane by way of Kham-Thong-Niai, along the Sedone (4 to 5 days). This road is a first category road over a distance of five kilometers from Keng-Kok to Keng-Pho. The falls of the Sedone can thus be avoided by a cart road at all seasons of the year. Over the rest of its route the road belongs to the second category.

2. Road from Saravane to Attopeu by way of Thateng, the plateau of the Bolovens, Nong-Bok and the Se-Pien (4 to 5 days. Second category).

3. Road from Saravane to Ai-Lao by way of Muong-Nong (a poor path).

Province of Darlac. 1. Road from Ban-Me-Thuot or Darlac to Ninh-Hoa (Annam). A six or seven day trip. This is a cart track on the Laotian side of the divide, that is to say as far as Ai-Bloum. At Me-Sao a branch forks toward Cong-Son (Annam). This is a portion of the route selected for the Saigon-Qui-Nhon railway.

[478] 2. Cart road from Ban-Done to Kratie, either by way of the Pou-Kha (10 to 12 days), or by going around the mountain to the north and connecting with the road from Stung-Treng to Kratie at Sreki.

2. PROJECTED LAND ROUTES OF COMMUNICATION

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Three large highways are projected, namely:

1. From Savannakhet to Ai-Lao and Hué; [Illustration here]
2. From Pak-Hin-Boun to Vinh by way of Ha-Trai;
3. From Luang-Prabang to Vien-Tiane.

These roads will be negotiable by carts and will be provided with iron and wooden bridges. Engineering officers have been placed at the disposition of the Superior Resident of Laos to make a study of these various routes.

185 491 653

A credit of 32,500 francs has been established for the construction of [478] these roads in the 1900 budget, and another of 10,000 francs has been set aside for improving the existing roads.

These credits are allocated for meeting the costs of equipment, iron, skilled labor, etc. Current repairs are made through statute labor and payments in kind which all registered persons owe.

Supervision of these projects falls to the inspectors and chief guards of the native civil guard.

With support such as this, it becomes clear that it will be possible to carry out quite large road projects with credits which might seem quite insufficient at first glance. It is true that they will be renewed as the need arises.

3. PRESENT RAILWAY ROUTES

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"There is only one railway in Laos. It crosses the island of Khone and is used for transhipment of passengers and goods from the lower reach to the Khone-Pakmoun reach and vice versa. It is a narrow railway, with a gauge of one meter. It is 4.5 kilometers long. It was built by the administration and placed at the service of the River Merchant Fleet [Messageries Fluviales]."

4. PROJECTED RAILWAY ROUTES

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"A railway is planned which will connect the great middle reach of the Mekong with a seaport in Annam, passing through Ai-Lao, Quang-Tri and Hué. This would make it possible for all the products of central Laos to flow down towards Annam, and avoid for transports in general the disadvantages and dangers of the Kemmarat rapids. Studies for this line were begun in the first days of 1899, and have continued during the dry season of 1899-1900" (1).

(1) Le Laos français, op. cit. [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

The portion of this line in Annamite territory, that is to say the Quang-Tri-Hué-Tourane section, is included in the schedule of expenditures to be covered by a loan of 200 millions, to the extent of 24 millions. Since it is 195 kilometers long, the cost comes to 125,000 francs per kilometer.

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[480] Construction of this line was authorized by the law of December 25, 1898, but its extension to the Mekong, and that is to say the means of entrance into Laos, is classified among the lines of third-degree urgency for which routes have scarcely been outlined.

Another railway has also been planned from Binh-Dinh to Attopeu, with the same third-degree urgency classification as the line from Savannakhet to Quang-Tri. It seems astonishing that anyone should have thought, even as a line of third-degree urgency, of a line which would start from the sea and end in a cul-de-sac, crossing one of the most mountainous regions which is inhabited by Kha tribes who are still partly unpacified. It may be that there is some thought of facilitating, by means of such a line, the exploitation of the gold and copper-bearing deposits in the region of Attopeu, even though it has now been established that the best deposits are located on the Se-Sane, more than 50 kilometers to the south of this point as the crow flies. It is also to be feared that by reason of the nature of the terrain this line may cost as much as 200,000 francs per kilometer, if the conditions of its route be compared with those of the lines estimated at 125,000 francs.

The projected Savannakhet-Quang-Tri railway does not seem to be the best solution for creating an entry into Laos and an outlet to the sea.

In the first place, it is not the shortest and most economical, despite the low elevation of the ridge of Ai-Lao, which is only 410 meters in altitude.

Besides, Savannakhet has never been a trade center and market of distribution and transit like Luang-Prabang, Pak-Lay, Nong-Khay and Bassac.

To be sure, it is an administrative center situated opposite the market of Ban-Mouk and the seat of the main office of the Cochinchina River Merchant Fleet Company [Compagnie des Messageries Fluviales], which has storehouses, a depot, workshops, etc. there. But this center was built up from nothing scarcely six years ago. The market of Ban-Mouk is an unimportant one, and the office of the River Merchant Fleet is inaccessible to its steam launches during a large part of the year.

[481] If Nong-Khay, instead of Ban-Mouk, were located opposite Savannakhet, there would be an advantage to capturing this great market in which the major part of the trade of Upper and Middle Laos is centered, and to turn this trade away from Bangkok to the profit of Tourane. But one must surrender to the evidence, for Nong-Khay

6: Goudal--42-43 S-3 (1934) 1938 Laotians
116, 466, 482, 653, 177.46 France
636.46

"In Laos, the regulation of compulsory labour for public purposes has been the subject of a number of legislative measures, including an Order by the Senior Resident of 27 June 1933 which closely resembles that issued by the Governor-General of 5 February 1932.

Moreover, in the countries of the Union where this form of labour is still permitted, Orders are issued periodically establishing the [43] maximum weight of the load carried by porters and the rates of wages payable to such workers. Annual reports are also sent to the central administrative authorities on the value and usefulness of requisitioned labour. If the present effort made by the authorities is continued, it is practically certain that in the near future compulsory labour levies for transport work and large-scale public works will become a thing of the past."

7: Thompson--369-370 J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians-
116, 647, 645, 653, 177.64 France
636.64

"The centralized administration of Laos was not only part of the French mania for simplification and uniformity, which for various [370] reasons had reached Laos later than elsewhere, but was primarily stimulated by the economic importance of Laos's mines and town building in the post-war period. The modernization of Vientiane was especially notable, for it had been buried under the jungle, 400 kilometres from the sea, and on an almost unnavigable river. When the potential wealth of the country became evident, the administration began to veer away from the Protectorate ideal to direct government, making tabula rasa of native institutions. Some Hanoi officials took it into their head to suppress the King of Luang-Prabang as an obstacle to transforming Laos into a bona-fide colony. Varenne had the good sense to recognize how much the Laotians venerated their king, and so he rescued his throne from the assimilationist peril. The Protectorate was saved, and to push Laos farther along the trail blazed by Annam and Cambodia, a native advisory assembly was given to the country in 1929, and a mixed Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, both of which recently sent delegates to the Grand Conseil. The process can only fully develop when the rail and road network is completed--that administrative pipe-dream linking Laos to the rest of the Union--which in 1936 looked perilously near fulfilment. An unfortunate corollary is that the forty-year tariff freedom of Laos, a miracle in French colonization, died in 1932 with the growth of the Siamese and Indo-Chinese railroad construction."

7: Thompson--375 J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians
116, 489, 503, 653

"The Mekong was the only means of communication with Cochin-Chinese seaports. The subsidy accorded to the Compagnie des Messagéries Fluviales to improve its navigation of the Mekong was too high for the colony's budget, yet inadequate for the work it had to do. Hundreds of thousands of francs were lost in acquiring a knowledge of these problems and in training a personnel. Mekong boats must reckon on three periods of navigation. In low water there are no less than eight trans-shipments between Phnom-Penh and Luang-Prabang, by rail and by road, both of which were expensive and difficult to build because of the shifting surface of the land. Mid-season is the best for navigation, since high water means contending with a terrible current. Laos is desperately in need of railroads, and it has fewer than any other country in the Union. Every Governor, from Doumer on, has had railroad projects, but they have always been laid aside for other works. The recent realization of Laos's mineral wealth through journalistic propaganda has been counteracted by the depression; yet once again there is promise to fill this crying need, notably Robin's impetus to road-building in 1935-6. Unless this is soon done, Laotian commerce will escape permanently to Bangkok. Contraband can never be controlled along the great watery frontier, and Siam's comparatively duty-free imports and cheap railroad and boat transportation will always have the advantage."

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is no further from Vinh than Savannakhet is from Tourane. In fact, the distance by steamship to Hin-Boun (or Tha-Kek) and from there to Ben-Thuy [Illustration here] (port of Vinh) by way of Nape, the ridge of Tram-Mua and Ha-Trai by railway is only 500 kilometers, whereas it is also 500 kilometers from Savannakhet to Tourane.

It has been objected that the ridge of Tram-Mua, the highest point on the line in question, is at an altitude of more than 1,200 meters, that many calcareous peaks encumber the route, and that the port of Ben-Thuy has a sand bar (that of Cua-Hoi) which leaves a depth of water of only 1.5 to 4.5 meters, depending on the tide.

All of this information is correct, although somewhat exaggerated. The ridge of Tram-Mua is not an insurmountable obstacle, and the road which crosses it leaves the Mekong at the 250 meter level and manages to reach it by rounding the [482] peaks of Pou-Hak and Pou-Kha-Sak and by rising gradually, ascending 1000 meters over a distance of about 140 to 150 kilometers.

Ha-Trai, moreover, which is situated on the river of Ngan-Pho, is at approximately the 100 meter level, and the descent from the ridge requires half a day on elephant back. The slope is very steep, without any doubt, on the Annamite side, since it represents the hypotenuse of a right triangle with a base 15 kilometers long and an altitude of 1,100 meters. It is not such, however, as to make the establishment of a railroad impossible, and cog-railways could also be used, as in Switzerland, at the steepest parts of the route.

Finally, the bar of Cua-Hoi is only an imaginary obstacle. Indeed, it would be sufficient merely to extend the railway beyond the bar, where the foundation is everywhere solid enough, or else to dredge a channel.

From the financial point of view the advantage also lies with the Hin-Boun-Ben-Thuy project, which will cost 30 millions instead of 61. Indeed, expenditures of 24 millions are anticipated for the Quang-Tri-Tourane section, to which 37 millions must be added for the Quang-Tri-Savannakhet section (about 300 kilometers at 125,000 francs per kilometer), whereas if we assume a cost of 150,000 francs (1) per kilometer for the Hin-Boun-Ben-Thuy line (about 200 kilometers),

(1) Cost anticipated for the Vietri-Lao-Kay and Saigon-Qui-Nhon lines.

we are confronted with an expenditure of 30 millions. The difference between 30 and 61 millions is so great that it would even be possible